

# FAQs for West Virginia American Water Kanawha Valley Customers

## **What happened?**

On January 9, a chemical spill from a chemical company occurred and leaked into the Elk River, causing contamination of the Kanawha Valley water system. Because the entire Kanawha Valley water system is affected, West Virginia American Water has issued a **DO NOT USE WATER NOTICE** for all West Virginia American Water customers in Kanawha, Boone, Putnam, Lincoln, Logan, Clay, Roane and Jackson counties, as well as customers in Culloden in Cabell County.

## **What should I do?**

**DO NOT USE THE WATER.** Due to the nature of the contamination, the water should not be used for any purpose other than toilet flushing and firefighting. Alternative sources of water should be used for all purposes. Bottled water or water from another, safe source should be used for drinking, making ice, brushing teeth, washing dishes, bathing, food and baby formula preparation and all other purposes until further notice.

## **What is being done?**

An interagency team including the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health, West Virginia American Water and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continue to monitor and sample both raw and finished water and crews are conducting flushing throughout the distribution system.

When extensive testing has produced results showing that levels of MCHM are below one part per million (1 ppm) and the water is deemed acceptable for normal use, the ban will be lifted in a strict, methodical manner to help ensure the water system is not overwhelmed, thereby causing more water quality and service issues.. The Kanawha Valley water system is the largest and most complex water system in the state, with over 100 water storage tanks and more than 1,700 miles of pipeline.

## **How will the lift process work?**

Zones will be established based on the flow of water from the treatment plant through the system. Again, this will ensure the system is flushed properly and help avoid pressure issues that could cause service interruptions.

## **How will I know if my home is in a lifted zone?**

West Virginia American Water along with the interagency team will communicate the lift zones through a variety of sources including an interactive webpage where customers can enter their home or business address and see their water service status. We strongly encourage all customers with access to the website to use this tool first. Once active, it will be accessible at [www.westvirginiaamwater.com](http://www.westvirginiaamwater.com).

In addition to the website, lift zone information will also be provided to all media. To supplement that, automated phone calls using our current company customer database will be launched in waves for customers in each zone as they are able to be lifted.

A temporary local 24/7 hotline will be established, communicated and available for additional clarification. The hotline will be for the exclusive purpose of helping customers in border areas or

for those who do not have internet access. Representatives will not be able to provide any information beyond clarification on lift locations. All other questions should be directed to our Customer Service Center at 1-800-685-8660.

**What should I do about the water in my home's plumbing, hot water heater, appliances?**

When the situation has been resolved and the water is determined to be safe, we will advise customers how to address these issues with household plumbing. For now, DO NOT USE the water except for flushing toilets or fire protection.

**Will I have to pay for the water used to flush my home plumbing?** West Virginia American Water will be offering customers a credit of 1000 gallons, which is more than will likely be required to flush the average residential home. The average residential customer uses approximately 3,300 gallons per month.

**What health risks are associated with this chemical contamination?**

Customers with concerns of being exposed to or consuming the water should call the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222. If someone in your home is sick, you should go to the hospital or call your physician.

You can also call the county Department of Health at 304-344-5243

General guidelines on ways to lessen health risks are available from the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 1-800-426-4791.

**Why weren't customers notified earlier about the emergency and contamination?**

We cannot comment on when or how the chemical spill occurred, because we are not source of the spill, which occurred at a chemical company along the Elk River. But as soon as we learned of it, we took immediate action to determine the spill's impact on water sources. We worked with the state and other experts, and as soon as it was determined that the most prudent action was to issue a "Do Not Use," we issued this information to our customers.

We have and will continue to work hand-and-hand with state and federal officials until this event is resolved.

**Why didn't the water treatment plant shutdown when it was known that there was a spill?**

If the plant had shutdown, customers would have no water at all. A plant shutdown would have meant that there would have not been water for fire protection and basic sanitation. Our obligations to our communities are not just for drinking water, but also for public sanitation and fire protection. Under normal conditions, the plant would have been out of water within a few hours. Considering the presence of the chemical MCHM still in the Elk River, the plant would still be off at this time if that action had been taken.

**Where can I find alternative sources of water?**

Kanawha County Emergency Officials through the assistance of West Virginia American Water and the National Guard have obtained "Water Buffalos and Water Tankers" to assist with the distribution of water to the citizens. Citizens will need to take their own containers, plastic bottles, jugs and pitchers, to obtain water from the water buffalos and water tankers.

Water distribution centers have been set up at designated locations [http://www.wchstv.com/newsroom/eyewitness/140110\\_22281.shtml](http://www.wchstv.com/newsroom/eyewitness/140110_22281.shtml), but please note that locations will change throughout the day. We will keep this page posted with the latest information. Locations are being determined by the Army and the most-up-to-date locations can be found at your County's EOC website.

We have coordinated with federal, state and county emergency officials to obtain more bottled water to place at distribution centers.

If you are elderly, disabled or ill and cannot access water, please call the Emergency Operations Center at **304-746-8828** for assistance. (NOTE: Water will not be delivered to homes unless there is a serious illness or need.)

**What about other water sources downstream?**

West Virginia American Water is aware of and prepared for other potential impacts resulting from the chemical spill plume migrating downstream. We've been working with state and federal officials, and the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission to model the plume to track the Elk River spill, along with a small spill that occurred in Belpre, OH, earlier this week.

We met today with ORSANCO representatives to review test results. Water sampling continues on the Elk, Kanawha and Ohio Rivers to detect any evidence of the chemical. We expect there will be considerable dilution in the rivers that will work in our favor and mitigate the impact of the spill on the water in Huntington.

We are regularly analyzing samples at the intake of the Huntington plant, and at the request of ORSANCO, we are also monitoring water quality at a point about 40 miles upstream to monitor the progression of the spill. Currently, we have not detected any significant levels in the river. In addition, we've brought in additional chemists to help with the monitoring.

Regarding the other chemical spill on the Ohio River (unrelated to the Charleston event) about 120 miles upstream of the Huntington intake, we continue to track and perform testing. We are confident that our Huntington plant's existing treatment barriers are sufficient to control this chemical, and our experts are also prepared to increase treatment, if deemed necessary.

**What if I have a claim for loss?**

West Virginia American Water has received some calls from customers about the process to make a claim for loss resulting from the Freedom Industries' chemical spill. Although West Virginia American Water is not responsible for the spill, if anyone wishes to call West Virginia American Water for that purpose, we ask that you do so by contacting our customer service at 1.800.685.8660.

Our customer service center will take your contact information and report it to our insurance company for review. The insurance company will contact you about your claim.

**For more information, please contact Customer Service at 1-800-685-8660.**